

**192nd Anniversary Commemoration of
The Battle of New Orleans**

**Living History Participant
Information Handbook**



January 12 – 13, 2007

Chalmette Battlefield

Chalmette, Louisiana

Jean Lafitte National Historical Park & Preserve, National Park Service

Contents

Event Overview	page 1
Schedule	page 3
Logistics	page 6
Historic Weapons and Black Powder	page 9
A Few Words on Historical Authenticity	page 10
What We Mean By Interpretation	page 11
Emergencies	page 12
Event Organizational Structure & Contacts	page 12
Historical Background Information	page 13
Participant Application	page 21

EVENT OVERVIEW

Coinciding with the January 8, 1815 date of the Battle of New Orleans, the National Park Service holds an anniversary commemoration of the battle every January at Chalmette Battlefield, part of Jean Lafitte National Historical Park & Preserve. For many years the anniversary commemoration was primarily a living history encampment on the battlefield during the second weekend in January, but in recent years it has grown to include a wreath-laying ceremony on January 8th and other non-living history activities. This event information guide focuses mainly on the living history encampment and is intended mainly for the potential living history participant. We hope it will provide the information you need and answer most of your questions.

Chalmette Battlefield, one of the most important sites pertaining to the early history of the United States, is located on the left bank of the Mississippi River about six miles down river from Jackson Square, the heart of New Orleans' French Quarter. The physical address – and mailing address – is 8606 West St. Bernard Highway, Chalmette, Louisiana, 70043. Chalmette is an unincorporated community of 30,000 people in St. Bernard Parish. The battlefield is a quiet and peaceful place but it's only a 20-minute drive to the French Quarter and some of the world's best cuisine, best music, and, of course, Bourbon Street!

Living history units representing both British and American forces participate in the encampment, and each "army" sets up a separate camp area on its respective side of the battlefield (see details in "Logistics" section). On the British side, appropriate units to represent include the 4th, 7th, 21st, 43rd, 44th, 93rd, and 95th Regiments of Foot, the 1st and 5th West India Regiments, the 14th Light Dragoons, and the Royal Artillery, along with sundry representatives of the Royal Navy and the Royal Engineers. On the American side appropriate units include the 7th and 44th Infantry Regiments, Light Artillery Corps, US Marines, US Navy gunners, Baratarian gunners, Free Men of Color, the several units making up Plauche's Battalion, Beale's Rifles, Jugeat's Choctaws, and the

Tennessee and Kentucky Militias. These lists are not exhaustive; feel free to contact park staff and discuss your impression.

Emplaced in embrasures in the reconstructed American rampart at the battlefield, the park has two reproduction artillery pieces, both 6-pounders, that artillery crews fire as part of historic weapons demonstration programs. (The bigger iron 12-pounder on the naval carriage that some of you may remember has been retired for safety reasons.) Otherwise, participants must bring their own small arms, tents and all other gear. The park provides black powder, certain meals, and other camp supplies (see details in “Logistics” and “Black Powder and Historic Weapons” sections).

Above all, the living history event is an **interpretive** program for park visitors. Period authenticity is very important (see “A Word on Historic Authenticity” section), but just as important is telling the story of the battle and its consequences in a compelling way so that visitors make connections and understand the “so what?” and the relevance of the battlefield *today*. Please refer to the “Interpretation vs. Information” section for a discussion on interpretation in the National Park System.

As we get closer to the bicentennial of the Battle of New Orleans in 2015 we want to reach as many potential participants as possible. Feel free to share this announcement packet and application with units that may not be on our mailing list. It is also available in PDF format on our website, www.nps.gov/jela/. We encourage and welcome any interested War of 1812-era unit to apply, **but only units that receive confirmation from the park will be allowed to participate in the 192nd Anniversary Commemoration of the Battle of New Orleans.**

SCHEDULE

FRIDAY, JANUARY 12, 2007

Morning parade in both camps will be promptly at 9:00 a.m. All participants are expected to attend.

For the general public, the battlefield will open on Friday at 9:00 a.m. and close at 4:00 p.m. Event publicity will encourage general visitors to avoid Saturday's crowds and come on Friday afternoon, so living history participants be prepared for historic weapons demonstrations and other activities until flag lowering ceremonies at 3:30 p.m.

School Day The first groups will be scheduled to arrive at 9:30 a.m., and we expect the last groups to depart by 2:00 p.m. They will be invited and encouraged to stay as long as they like, with departure times depending on their own school schedules. Most groups will bring sack lunches to eat at the park, in designated areas away from the encampment.

School groups will explore the battlefield at their own pace and under the leadership of teachers and chaperones with no prescribed tour route. To prepare the students and teachers for their visit, each registered group will have received a pre-visit packet with lots of materials and activities geared to their grade level and based on the Louisiana state curriculum. Upon their arrival at the battlefield that morning, they will be greeted by uniformed park staff who will give them a brief orientation to the site. At that time teachers will receive a schedule of events for the day with a map that denotes where all activities are located. **That schedule should include your unit's camp and any programs or activities you do.** For example, if you are doing a demonstration program on rolling musket cartridges, the schedule will state your location and the times of your programs. You can give specific times for programs or simply say "every hour" or "every half-hour" or "on-going." The attached "Participant Application" has a space for this information. We urge every participating unit to schedule activities that we can list on the day's schedule. It really helps the teachers plan their days and make the visits more meaningful for their classes.

Friday's School Day is a long-standing tradition at the Battle of New Orleans Anniversary Commemoration, and can draw up to 2000 students. Although school enrollment is down considerably in St. Bernard and Orleans Parishes in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, the numbers in Jefferson and St. Tammany Parishes are up. The park plans a recruiting effort to make the 2007 School Day attendance as big as pre-Katrina years, and we hope that in 2008 we will be able to revive the Thursday School Day as well.

Some living history participants consider School Day to be the best and most rewarding part of the whole event. The park greatly appreciates everyone's effort and participation, and urges all of you to make your travel plans to arrive by Thursday night in order to be a part of School Day on Friday.

Flag lowering and dinner – The day's activities will end with flag lowerings in both camps at 3:30, and we will clear the park of visitors and close at 4:00. The park will provide dinner for participants – buffet style – from 4:30 to 5:30 on Friday.

The Lantern Tour – "The Night Before the Battle" - begins at 6:00 p.m. Friday evening. NOTE THAT THIS IS A BIG CHANGE FROM YEARS PAST WHEN THE LANTERN TOUR WAS ON SATURDAY NIGHT.

The tour follows a route of about eight or nine stops that present short vignettes of scenes that might have taken place on the night of January 7, 1815. No audience interaction is permitted so first person interpretation and even portraying historic figures is encouraged. Historically, since no women would have been on the field that night, we ask that all women participants either help to conduct groups along the tour route or be part of the vignette that features women at home in the city of New Orleans preparing for the upcoming battle.

Tours will start every ten minutes from 6:00 to 8:30 p.m. Tickets will be \$4 per person ages 6 and older (5 and under FREE). This year, all tickets will be sold in advance, see website for updated details.

For your family members, there will be a special, free “first run” tour at 5:50 p.m. Each living history participant can request up to two (2) free tickets for members of their family.

Revenues from the Lantern Tour are used to purchase items to enhance the living history aspect of the anniversary. From recent years the park has purchased two new “bell tents” for the British camp, a huge 25 feet by 18 feet all-weather “Star-Spangled Banner” flag, and some large copper wear pieces for the camp laundresses. Suggestions are welcome for how to spend 2007 Lantern Tour monies.

SATURDAY, JANUARY 13, 2007 will be the big day for the general public, with camp demonstrations and programs at the battlefield all day, followed by an off-site skirmish reenactment in the late afternoon.

Morning parade in both camps will be promptly at 9:00 a.m. All participants are expected to attend.

The battlefield encampment will open to the general public at 9:00 a.m. Visitors will be directed to an off-site parking area where free shuttle buses will take them the short ride to the Battlefield. Shuttle buses will drop visitors at the Welcome Tent. There will be no driving on the Battlefield Road nor any parking allowed at the Visitor Center Parking Lot. Special arrangements will be made for handicapped individuals.

As with School Days, each visitor will receive a detailed schedule of events and a map of the encampment. There will be a full schedule of small arms and artillery firing demonstrations throughout the day, along with a few wreath-laying memorial ceremonies. Most other activities in the military and civilian camps are ongoing, but if you or your unit want to have any special demonstrations or programs included in the schedule, indicate so on the Participant Application.

Flag lowerings in each camp will be at 3:30 and the park will close at 4:00 p.m.

The skirmish reenactment (representing the Night Battle of December 23, 1814) is planned and sponsored by the St. Bernard Parish Government. It will be held at Pakenham Oaks, about one mile from the battlefield, at 5:00 on Saturday afternoon. The National Park Service has been excited to cooperate with the parish to make this reenactment grow every year leading up to 2012-2015. This year, parish shuttles will take living history participants back and forth between the sites for greater ease and timeliness. As more information is available from St. Bernard Parish we will update the 192nd Anniversary Commemoration link on the park website, www.nps.gov/jela/.

SUNDAY, JANUARY 14 will be the day we wrap up the 192nd Anniversary and start thinking about the 193rd ! We will provide all living history participants with an event evaluation form – please give us your suggestions. We strive to make each year’s event better than the last. The park will provide a farewell breakfast – again

buffet style – from 7:30 to 8:30, and then it will be time to break camps and pack up. We ask that all camps be cleared by noon so park staff can get to the job of cleaning up.

LOGISTICS

ARRIVAL, CAMPING AND OTHER LODGING OPTIONS

Participants are welcome to camp on the battlefield in designated areas using period tentage. Several portable toilets will be placed throughout the park convenient to the American line and the British and Civilian camps. PLEASE check with your camp commander before setting up camp (see “Camps and Camp Commanders” below).

We encourage you to arrive Thursday in order to participate in School Day on Friday. You may arrive as early as Thursday morning. Starting Thursday night the main gate at the battlefield entrance on Battlefield Road will be closed but not locked after hours, so you may arrive any time during the night. If you arrive during the day on Friday you will be allowed to drive into camp and unload your gear, but then you must move your vehicle to the designated parking area in the cemetery (see “Parking & Shuttles” below).

The one hotel in St. Bernard Parish, the Marina Motel (formerly the Econolodge), has reopened. The address is 5353 Paris Road in Chalmette and the telephone number is 504-277-5353. Paris Road is the main highway coming into Chalmette from I-10 and the north (exit 246 on I-10, the Chalmette exit, is I-510, which becomes LA 47, which is Paris Road). The hotel is about a ten-minute drive from the battlefield.

There are hundreds of other hotels, inns and guest houses in New Orleans East, the French Quarter, Downtown New Orleans and beyond.

CAMPS AND CAMP COMMANDERS

The American camp will stretch along Battlefield Road (the main park entrance road) from the monument toward the highway. Units will be allowed to leave a little open space between camps to facilitate dealing with large crowds, but the overall idea on the American side is to establish one camp and create the impression of *one army*, albeit made of diverse troops, united against the enemy.

A camp for civilian impressions will be in the area between the river and the Visitor Center. For interpretive purposes we refer to the civilian area as “the city of New Orleans.” This allows for all sorts of non-military activities that would have taken place away from the front line, like blacksmithing, musicians, and the very important contributions of women to the defense of the city: sewing clothing and preparing meals to send down to the troops, rolling bandages and preparing for casualties, and even the Ursuline nuns’ continual prayer vigil.

The exact location of British camp is yet to be determined. The customary location next to the Malus-Beauregard House might not be available because of construction. The park expects that the long-awaited project to completely replace the slate roof will begin this fall and go into the spring. Once the project begins and the construction area is fenced, we will choose a suitable area for the British camp. Note that the British command will not be able to use the house as its headquarters.

Mr. Tim Pickles and Mr. Steve Abolt have accepted the park’s invitations to serve as commanders of the British and American camps, respectively. They have served in these positions at this event for over a decade. They are excited and honored to serve in this capacity again. They will expect that during hours when the parks is open to visitors, all military participants do their utmost in properly portraying the men of both sides by following military protocol, decorum, and courtesy as laid out in the regulations of each respective army (the regulations in effect at the time of the December 1814 - January 1815 New Orleans Campaign). In regard to decisions on period military matters, the park delegates authority to the camp commander(s).

Upon arrival, participants should first report to their camp commanders for their camp locations. We ask that your camp be laid out according to the regulations. We know that because of the weather and the lay of the ground some deviations will occur. If you have any questions concerning the layout of your camp please contact your camp commander prior to your arrival. It will facilitate the duty of the camp commander if each participating unit lists on the Participant Application the amount of frontage and depth that it will need for its camp.

Camp commanders will hold a morning officer's call with unit leaders on Friday and Saturday to discuss the day's goals, objectives and duty stations. The times and locations of these meetings will be announced once you arrive.

Success of the event depends on participants being punctual for their assigned duties, demonstrations and programs.

Your camp commander is also your liaison with the park staff. If any problems arise that cannot be resolved within the individual unit, participants should bring them to the attention of their camp commander. If a resolution still cannot be found, the camp commander will take the matter to park staff.

FOOD

Hot and cold drinks will be available for living history participants throughout the event at the Supply Tent behind the Visitor Center. The Supply Tent will also have continental breakfast items available for living history participants on Friday and Saturday mornings.

For lunch on Friday and Saturday, the park will supply raw meat, vegetables and other ingredients for a stew. We ask that you cook these meals in camp as part of the living history interpretive program.

Dinner Friday evening, before the Lantern Tour, will be a catered, buffet-style affair of favorite New Orleans dishes.

Sunday breakfast will also be a catered buffet. This farewell breakfast allows participants to concentrate on breaking camp and packing up instead of cooking and cleaning.

SUPPLIES

In addition to food, the park will provide potable water in gallon jugs, plenty of dry firewood and bedding straw, and candles for use during the Lantern Tour.

Upon request, items for demonstrations may also be provided, such as sugar cane for fascines and poles for ladders in the British camp. Please contact the park to arrange for these materials.

Please remember that the park will provide all black powder as well (see "Historic Weapons and Black Powder" section).

PARKING & SHUTTLES

During the entire two-day event, no vehicles will be allowed to remain parked *anywhere* on the battlefield, including roadways and parking lots, while visitors are on the grounds (9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. both days). Vehicle parking for volunteer participants – and park staff as well - will be along Military Cemetery Road out of sight from the battlefield and just under 1/2 mile away. Two shuttle vans will run continuously between the cemetery and battlefield. The shuttle stop for the British camp will be where the Malus-Beauregard House

sidewalk meets the Shell Road (the road that parallels the base of the levee); for the American camp it will be at the intersection of Battlefield Road (the main entrance road) and the battlefield tour loop road (at the Tennessee Militia end of the line).

HISTORIC WEAPONS AND BLACK POWDER

We will have an extensive schedule of black powder firing demonstrations featuring small arms in the British Camp and both artillery and small arms in the American camp. Bring your small arms but **do not bring black powder to the battlefield**. The park will provide all black powder in prepared cartridges, whether for musket, rifle or artillery. If you want to bring an artillery piece, please contact the park's Black Powder Coordinator (see "Event Contacts" on page 12).

A copy of the Chalmette Battlefield Standard Operating Procedure for Historic Weapons and Black Powder Safety will be provided to confirmed unit leaders. The event Black Powder Safety Officer will use this document and other pertinent National Park Service guidelines and policies to make any decisions regarding historic weapons and black powder. The event Black Powder Safety Officer will have the final authority on any such decision. As always, safety is the primary concern.

For American units, the National Park Service prefers its own modified version of the timeless Von Steuben drill. Other drills are appropriate for this period, and at the discretion of and with the approval of the event Black Powder Safety Officer, individual units may use the War of 1812 period manual to which they are most accustomed when firing and marching as a separate unit. Morning and evening formations in the American camp as well as the mass firing demonstration Saturday afternoon will be conducted according to Smythe's Manual. For British units, the corresponding regulation period musket and rifle drills for infantry and cavalry will be used. Artillery drill will be conducted according to NPS regulations and safety modifications. On the firing line the word of the NPS Black Powder Safety Officer is absolute.

Before a unit (or any member thereof) can participate in any firing demonstration, 1) each unit leader must sign the Black Powder Agreement certifying that he or she has read and understood the Black Powder SOP and will comply with it fully; 2) all firearms must pass a safety inspection; and 3) the unit must demonstrate its drill to the satisfaction of the event Black Powder Safety Officer. **Facilities for weapon maintenance and repair are extremely limited on site and there will be no time for training during the event.** If you have any questions about drills, weapons and firing demonstrations please contact the park Black Powder Coordinator well before January.

Edged weapons NPS policy and the Chalmette Battlefield Standard Operating Procedure for Historic Weapons and Black Powder Safety state that edged weapons like swords, knives and bayonets may be drawn and brandished, in a safe and prudent manner, when the bearer and the weapon are behind a barrier in a secure area out of reach of visitors. **At no time may event participants engage in combat with edged weapons or simulated edged weapons without the express permission and consent of the event Black Powder Safety Officer.** When NOT behind a barrier, however, when out amongst visitors, swords, knives, bayonets and the like may NOT be fully drawn. They may be partially drawn out of the scabbard enough to expose some of the blade for visual inspection for interpretive purposes, but no visitor may touch the blade. Also, when not behind a barrier, bayonets may be fixed on muskets but the muskets must be kept in a vertical position and the bearer must maintain control of the weapon and the bayonet. At no time may muskets be fired with the bayonet fixed.

A FEW WORDS ON HISTORICAL AUTHENTICITY

The reputation of the National Park Service, the Chalmette Battlefield living history program, and the Battle of New Orleans Anniversary Commemoration depends on every living history participant striving for and maintaining the highest possible degree of historical accuracy and authenticity in period dress and accoutrements, character role portrayals and demonstrations. Furthermore, the reputation of every living history participant at the Chalmette Battlefield event depends on every other participant's dedication to these same high standards. At the battlefield we hold that *everyone* is responsible for historical authenticity. If you see something being worn or used by another participant or in camp that is "out of period" then the first course of action should be to find a gentle and tactful way to call attention to it and correct it. Second course of action will be for your unit leader to bring the matter to the attention of your camp commander, and third will be for the camp commander to bring it to the attention of park staff. Any determination made by park staff on historical authenticity and appropriateness is final.

During the anniversary encampment at Chalmette Battlefield, historical authenticity standards will be observed and in effect during hours when visitors are on the grounds: from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. daily, and Friday night during the lantern tour from 6:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m. All non-period articles will be kept out of sight, in tents with tent flaps closed and tied shut, or covered *well* with burlap or blankets or another appropriate material.

The event attempts to recreate a hastily assembled military camp on both sides. Excessive cast iron ware, glassware, pottery, baggage, furniture, and heavy objects are generally not suitable for this impression and should be kept to a reasonable minimum and/or out of sight. Some units, like the Tennessee Militia and the US Regulars, traveled a great distance to get here and of necessity traveled lightly. Other units, like local militia, lived nearby and may have enjoyed some material comforts brought from the city. And while British officers simply could not survive without their silver tea services, most of the British rank and file had endured considerable hardship and privation and arrived on the banks of the Mississippi with little more than what they could carry on their backs. Try to keep faithful to the impression you are portraying.

Bales of straw should be broken and the straw scattered or piled. Whole or partial bales are out of period, especially if tied with brightly colored nylon cord. Instead of using bales for seating, find and use logs or other things that would have been available here in 1814-15. (Across the levee by the river you will find an abundance of driftwood logs of all sizes and weights.)

Modern machine-made cigarettes and cigars should be smoked behind tents (not *in* them) and completely out of sight of the visiting public. Period hand-rolled smoking materials and pipes are acceptable.

WHAT WE MEAN BY INTERPRETATION?

What is “interpretation?”

In recent years, the National Park Service has devoted considerable time and effort to this question, to identify what we do as successful interpreters. Interpretation is not simply the communication of facts and information. Although facts are an important part of an interpretive program, they are not enough. Even when done well, a recitation of facts leaves the audience to wonder, “what does it all *mean*?”

Interpretation is the communication of facts and information **in such a way as to develop an appreciation and understanding of the park and its resources and their significances.** As interpreters we do this by facilitating connections between our audience and the meanings of the park. At the Chalmette Battlefield, our programs and presentations serve as catalysts for the audience to make connections with the Battle of New Orleans and the men and women involved. Our primary goal is not to provide information, but to provide access to meanings. First we provide accurate and balanced information. (Remember that there are at least two sides to every story, so the information we provide must take into account multiple points of view.) Then we provide a catalyst for the audience to make those connections. Members of the audience should arrive at their own conclusions because ultimately they will understand and appreciate the park and its resources on their own terms.

For example, a short talk during an artillery firing demonstration might include facts on the size of the piece, the material it is made from, effective range, and the firing drill. But the focus of the talk could be about the crew and the teamwork needed to fire the piece, the leadership necessary to run the drill, the unity that came from a well-drilled and well-led team, and the effectiveness in battle of such a unified team. These concepts of teamwork, leadership and unity are *universal concepts* that most everyone can relate to based on their own life experiences. There are many other universal concepts pertaining to the battle, including fear, suffering, sacrifice, family, patriotism, community, survival, and pride. Using universal concepts is one way to provide a catalyst for the audience to make connections.

For another example, a talk about the Battle of New Orleans would cover the basic facts of the British amphibious movement across Lake Borgne to the Villere plantation, where Keane decided to stop and rest and await reinforcements. But, instead, you could describe the experience for the typical British soldier: the little island where they waited with no tents or food in the cold and rain, then the arduous trip across the lake in the dark and cold wind, then the march through endless marshes of reeds and muck, finally arriving on dry ground in a strange place. Then pose some questions to the audience. “How would *you* have felt? Would you have been tired and hungry? Would your morale have been very high at that point?” Asking questions encourages the audience to think and arrive at their own conclusions. This is another way to provide a catalyst for the audience to make connections.

Interpreters must provide opportunities for the audience to make connections with the meanings of the resource, realizing that all audience members arrive with their unique set of filters. We meet this challenge by learning and understanding as much as possible about 1) the audience, and 2) the meanings we want to reveal. Using our skills – and techniques like living history – we craft the message we wish to deliver.

EMERGENCIES

National Park Service Protection Rangers will be in charge of emergency services during the event. The most up-to-date information regarding designated first aid stations and emergency procedures will be provided upon arrival at the event.

Information regarding emergency contact telephone numbers at the park will be provided to registered units in the confirmation letter to be mailed in December. As of this writing there is still no telephone service in most of St. Bernard Parish, including the battlefield. If this is still the case in December, we will provide cellular phone numbers to contact park staff at the event.

EVENT CONTACTS

Event Coordinator	Aly Baltrus	alyssa_baltrus@nps.gov (504) 717-7499
Living History Participant Coordinator and Black Powder Coordinator	Danny Forbis	danny_forbis@nps.gov (504) 589-2636 x228

BATTLE OF NEW ORLEANS – HISTORICAL BACKGROUND INFO

Few events in the early history of the republic had such immediate impact and such profound long-term consequences as the Battle of New Orleans, and few places are as symbolic and representative of this country's humble beginnings and rise to greatness as the Chalmette Battlefield. News of the American victory at Chalmette over a seemingly superior British force was received as a surprise to many people. But it was also received as proof that the young nation could overcome great obstacles to achieve the unexpected. It was seen as an example of things to come, and indeed it seems to have foreshadowed even greater victories and achievements in the future. As word of this first great military victory swept across the country so did a wave of patriotism and nationalism. Chalmette was a unifying event for Americans in 1815. It was also the beginning of the road to the White House for Andrew Jackson, who, as president in the 1820's, would have some very different ideas about how a government should serve its people. Even after his presidency, throughout the Age of Jacksonian Democracy, the social and political consequences of the victory at New Orleans were still being felt decades after that foggy morning in 1815. They are still being felt today.

For the British, the final Battle of New Orleans on January 8 was the culmination of a campaign marked by mistakes and failures. It was frustrating for most, humiliating for some. For those British regiments involved, it was a rare defeat in their otherwise glorious regimental histories. Soon the bad fortunes of New Orleans were overshadowed by great British victories at Waterloo and elsewhere. Nonetheless, in its immediate aftermath the Battle of New Orleans was horrible for the British. Chalmette was the site of a great tragedy, the shocking loss of many British lives. Hundreds of common soldiers, young men and family men, the backbone of the British army, died here, but so too did some of the more promising officers serving His Majesty, like Pakenham, Gibbs and Dale.

Try as we may to avoid the complicated issue of why the War of 1812 started, visitors will undoubtedly ask the question. The Battle of New Orleans and the War of 1812 have their origins in the Napoleonic Wars in Europe. The United States was caught up in this conflict between France and Great Britain, trying to maintain neutral rights and a very profitable trade with both sides. But neither side wanted the United States to carry on unimpeded neutral trade with the other and tried to interfere. The British even occasionally boarded American ships and impressed American seamen into the Royal Navy. But to limit the explanation to just these causes, however, is to oversimplify the story. As Tim Pickles says, “[w]hatever the War of 1812 was about, it was not about any of the oft-trumpeted causes: ‘Free trade and sailors’ rights,’ or ‘The second war for American Independence.’”¹ It is true that President Madison’s War Message of June 1, 1812 enumerated these very issues of “free trade” – the Orders in Council, British blockades and the carrying trade – and “sailors’ rights” – impressment. These *were* important issues to most Americans. Western and Southern farmers blamed falling commodity prices on British blockades that blocked access to European markets. But anti-war sentiment in New England – where one would expect these maritime issues to be most important – seem to betray Madison’s justifications. Something else was going on. Madison also mentioned renewed hostilities with American Indians along the western frontiers and British “influence” among those Indians. To many, this was an important issue too. “National honor” was a noble issue argued by some War Hawks, as were less noble reasons like the “Land Hunger Theory” and the “desire for Canadian land.”² *The Causes of the War of 1812*, edited by Bradford Perkins, is a collection of essays that discuss in detail most of these issues. The debate over the causes of the War of 1812 goes on, and is sure to flare up heatedly as the bicentennial of the war in 2012 approaches.

¹ Tim Pickles, *New Orleans 1815, Andrew Jackson Crushes the British* (Oxford, 1993), p. 7.

² Bradford Perkins, *The Causes of the War of 1812* (New York, 1962).

Congress declared war against Great Britain on June 18, 1812. The campaign season of 1812, in general terms, saw success for the United States at sea but humiliation and defeat on land (Hull's surrender at Detroit, the "massacre" at the River Raisin, and failed attacks across Niagara River and towards Montreal). The campaigns of the 1813 season were not as successful on the seas but more successful inland (the burning of York, then Perry's victory on Lake Erie that changed the balance of power in the west, which set the stage for the American victory at the River Thames). In the south, meanwhile, a civil war among the Creek Nation escalated into the Creek War in 1813. In March 1814, at the Horseshoe Bend of the Tallapoosa River, victory by Andrew Jackson, his Tennessee Militia, the 39th Infantry, and Creek allies effectively ended the resistance of the hostile Red Stick faction of the Creeks.

During these first two years of the war the British had been more focused on events in Europe. British armies and their allies had been quite busy fighting Napoleon and his armies all over Europe. The British had not been able to commit many resources to the "North American War" across the Atlantic. In Europe, however, the tide had turned against Napoleon. His campaign against Moscow in 1812 had ended in retreat and rout, and after being defeated at Leipzig in October, 1813 he had retreated all the way back to France. In March 1814 allied armies entered Paris and in April Napoleon abdicated and went into exile in Elba. The British were free to focus entirely on the North American War.

They made plans to launch three major offensives against the United States in 1814, three attacks against the three most important port cities of the country. The first target, the largest city and the most important port, was New York. In late August 1814 a British army of 10,000 troops crossed from Canada into upper New York State. They advanced about 20 miles, as far as the Saranac River, where they halted to await support from a British fleet on Lake Champlain. In early September that fleet was defeated near Plattsburgh. The British land force retreated back to Canada and so ended the New York Campaign of 1814. It was seen as disgraceful by British and Canadians.

The second planned campaign was the Chesapeake Campaign. It was also in late August (concurrent with the advance into New York) that a force of 4500 British troops landed in Maryland, near Benedict on the Patuxent River, and began the 40-mile march towards Washington. At Bladensburg, on the outskirts of the capital, 7000 US troops were waiting at the crossing of the Anacostia River. The troops were poorly positioned and had to retreat. The retreat turned into a rout and the British continued into Washington. They set fire to many government buildings and then withdrew the next day, reembarking and sailing around to Baltimore.

By early September another force of 4500, many of the same troops that had just occupied Washington, landed at North Point and began the ten-mile march to Baltimore. They advanced to the city's defenses and stopped to wait for the British navy to bombard the city into submission and surrender. All night on September 13 – 14 the British bombarded Fort McHenry with over 1500 rounds, but damage was minimal and the fort did not surrender. The land force decided to withdraw and the Battle of Baltimore and the Chesapeake Campaign ended.

The British turned their attention south to their third target: the Gulf Coast; Mobile; New Orleans. They expected an easy victory achievable with just a few thousand of their own troops joined by Indians, Spaniards, African-American slaves, and the creole people of Louisiana. Their plan was to attack Mobile and from there march on to New Orleans.

As a reward for his success in the Creek War and especially his victory at Horseshoe Bend, Andrew Jackson had been appointed Major General in the US Army in command of the Seventh Military District, comprised of the states of Tennessee and Louisiana and the Mississippi Territory (modern Mississippi and Alabama). He had

heard rumors and reports of a British plan to attack Mobile, so in late August, he headed there. Arriving in Mobile, Jackson ordered that Fort Bowyer (at Mobile Point on the barrier islands) be strengthened. Within two weeks a force of British and Indians attacked the fort, but failed to take it. Jackson pursued the small enemy force back to Pensacola, capital of West Florida, Spanish territory being used as a base by the British. He demanded that the Spanish governor surrender, but, refusing to do so, the American force attacked and occupied the city. The next day the British evacuated, but not before blowing up the main fort. Jackson had other fortifications around Pensacola destroyed, and then withdrew back to Mobile.

Much has been said about this audacious and illegal operation by Jackson, but it may have saved New Orleans. Left unfortified, Pensacola was useless to the British as a base of operations to attack Mobile and New Orleans. They had to completely change their plans. They were forced to attack New Orleans directly from the sea.

On November 24 the British invasionary fleet left Jamaica headed for the Gulf Coast of the United States. It was a combination of forces from the Chesapeake Campaign plus troops from the European theater. The fleet arrived off the Mississippi Gulf Islands on December 7 or 8.

Jackson, meanwhile, had arrived in New Orleans on December 1. Immediately he began assessing the defenses of the city and preparing for an enemy attack. He visited Fort St. Phillip, 80 miles downriver near the mouth of the Mississippi, and ordered various improvements. He stationed the local militia units of Plauché's Battalion and the Free Men of Color at other expected approaches to the city: Fort Petit Cocquille on the Rigolets (the pass from the Gulf and Lake Borgne into Lake Pontchartrain), Fort St. John on the shore of Lake Pontchartrain just 4 miles north of the city, and on the Chef Menteur Road approaching the city from the northeast. He also stationed five small gunships on Lake Borgne to patrol the water approaches to the Rigolets.

Contrary to Jackson's expectations, the British had decided upon an approach route across Lake Borgne and through the swamps as the best way into New Orleans. By December 12 a large fleet of British barges and service boats was rowing into Lake Borgne towards the American gunboats. Overnight the wind died and the American ships, unable to maneuver, lost the advantage of drawing the enemy into the fire of Fort Petit Cocquille. On the 13th the British captured one US ship and then on the 14th they resumed their pursuit. By sheer numbers they overwhelmed the Americans and took the ships and sailors captive. The loss was devastating for Jackson because he lost his eyes on the lakes. Furthermore, the lakes were now open to enemy navigation. Just when things might have looked hopeless, though, more troops arrived to reinforce Jackson's numbers. Major General William Carroll, who had succeeded Jackson as major general of the Tennessee Militia, arrived in the city with 3000 men. They were joined as well by General Coffee and his Tennessee cavalymen, moving in from Baton Rouge.

With control of the lakes, the British disembarked their troops onto Pea Island in Lake Borgne. This operation took five days, during which, without tents or shelter, they endured rain and freezing temperatures. Then the troops were ferried across Lake Borgne about 40 miles to Bayou Bienvenue, then through the winding waterways of the marshland and swamp, emerging on dry land at the rear edge of the Villere Plantation, about nine miles downriver from New Orleans. It was the morning of December 23rd. They marched about a mile and halted – they had reports of 20,000 American troops – and set up camp and headquarters in the Villere house. Their goal, New Orleans, was just a short march away.

By early afternoon Jackson, in his headquarters at 106 Royal Street, received news that the enemy had arrived. He immediately declared that “they shall not sleep on our soil tonight” and issued orders for his troops to prepare to march. By 5 p.m. the Americans were in position on the de la Ronde family plantation next door to the British at Villere. It was almost dark. At 7:30, as predetermined, the *USS Carolina*, which had drifted downriver, opened fire on the British camp and the so-called “Night Battle” of December 23 began. The American troops on land advanced, but after the initial surprise, the British regrouped and rallied to regain their original line. A thick fog rolled in off the river and in the confusion Jackson called off the fighting and withdrew to his original line. The British claimed it as a victory but in some respects it was really a victory for the Americans. The surprise attack stopped the British advance in its tracks and paralyzed them for several days. And Jackson’s inexperienced troops were now veterans. There were a few other surprises for the British. It was not going to be an easy victory, and instead of a warm welcome from a local population ready to join them, they found deserted homes and farms and “every appearance of hostility.”³

On the next morning, December 24, Jackson pulled his army back two miles and set up a defensive line at the old Rodriguez Canal that ran the boundary between the Chalmet family plantation on the downriver side and the McCarty family plantation above. Over the next several days soldiers and slaves from the city dug out the canal – about 12 feet wide and four feet deep – and on the upriver side built up an earthwork that stretched from the river's edge back to the

New Orleans in the Fall of 1814

New Orleans was a blend of cultures and languages. There were Creoles, descended from the original French settlers, who were strongly Bonapartist and hated the British. There were Spanish and Portuguese. There were newly arrived refugees from St. Domingue - French speaking, white, mulatto, slave. They reinforced the Gallic segment of the population just as thousands of Americans - protestant, English speaking, progressive minded - were also immigrating from eastern states. Rachel Jackson herself called it a "Great Babylon" and "wicked."

The years after the Louisiana Purchase in 1803 had brought drastic change. New Orleans was growing into the metropolis of the west. River trade had brought commerce, growth and prosperity. Population was increasing rapidly. It was the beginning of the Golden Age of New Orleans. But no one knew that in 1814. War had brought a steep decline in the commerce of the city. Raw sugar and bales of cotton sat on wharves awaiting export. People had heard the rumors of an enemy attack and feared the looting and plunder it would bring. The future was anything but certain.

³ George R. Gleig, *Campaigns of the British Army at Washington and New Orleans* (London, 1827), pp. 307-8, as quoted in Remini, *The Battle of New Orleans, Andrew Jackson and America's First Military Victory* (New York, 1999), p. 81.

swamp, a distance of about 3/4 mile. Logs and fence posts held back the mud and eventually, after about a week, this rampart - which came to be known as Line Jackson - was about seven or eight feet high from the bottom of the ditch before it. Jackson had artillery emplaced in batteries along his line, and moved his headquarters from the city down to the McCarty house, about 100 yards behind the line.

By December 24 the British had finished ferrying their troops ashore at the Villere farm. On December 25 the new commander, General Sir Edward Michael Pakenham, arrived with about 3000 additional troops. Pakenham was not pleased with the British position and situation; to him it seemed a bottleneck between the river to his left and the swamp to his right. He considered withdrawing but his officers advised against it. They remembered the retreat of the militia at Bladensburg and expected similar behavior here at New Orleans. They had no respect for the Americans, especially the dirty shirt militia, a bunch of rabbit hunters not worthy of being called an army!

On the morning of December 28 Pakenham ordered a general advance on the American line, what some historians have called a "Reconnaissance-In-Force." At 600 yards the Americans opened fire, as did the *Carolina* on the river. Caught in the crossfire, the British were surrounded by explosions and carnage. They fired their now-famous Congreve rockets but to little effect. Pakenham called off the advance, unaware that his column on the far left was in a position to possibly turn the American flank and win the day. Instead, the shame of retreat demoralized the British troops.

Now the British realized it was not going to be easy to overcome Jackson's defensive line. They decided to treat it just like a traditional fortification or city wall and set up siege batteries to reduce it. Pakenham ordered that 30 pieces of the largest artillery available from the fleet be brought ashore. By New Year's Eve they had 14 large guns for which they were constructing earthen batteries within 300 yards of the American line.

New Year's Eve, 1814. In the American camp there was music and morale was high. Remini writes that the Tennesseans especially were having "great fun" tormenting the enemy at night. "How different the British camp." There were no tents, no music, and little food. The weather was cold and damp and the general mood was gloomy.⁴

At about 10 a.m. on New Year's Day, January 1, 1815, the British started bombarding the American line. The Americans had to scramble into position but after a while began their counter-attack. For two hours the two sides fired at each other, but by noon the British fire began to slacken and by 3 p.m. all guns were silent. As the smoke cleared it became evident that the British had suffered many casualties. British guns were damaged, smashed and dismounted. The American rampart, on the other hand, remained completely intact with little damage. And there were few American casualties. The British gunners had not taken the time to find the proper range and most of their shots sailed over the heads of the Americans and landed in open fields behind the line. For the proud British Artillery Service it was "a total disaster" and "a monumental defeat." Morale among the British dropped even more.

Pakenham reevaluated his situation and came up with yet another plan, this time a bold two-pronged attack on both sides of the river. 1400 men ferried across the river would advance and

⁴ Remini, p. 104-5.

take the weak line and gun battery still under construction on the West Bank, then turn those guns to enfilade the Americans behind Line Jackson. At that time the attack on the main line would advance in two prongs, one along the river (the British left) and one by the swamp (the British right). Pakenham had over 5000 men on the line, plus sailors, engineers and the West Bank force - altogether at least 8000 men ready to take New Orleans. Jackson had about 4000 men, including those in reserve.⁵

By the night of January 7 the transport of troops to the West Bank was supposed to begin, but there were problems and delays. These troops were supposed to march upriver quickly to capture the American guns and turn them against the Americans, at which point Pakenham would charge the main line. In the end only about 400 men of the intended 1400 made it across, and by the time they arrived on the West Bank the battle on the East Bank had already begun.

There were delays on the East Bank as well. Fascines and ladders were to be carried ahead of the main advance to facilitate the crossing of the ditch, but this task was not accomplished. Remini says, "the attack should have been aborted right then and there."⁶ But Pakenham knew that morale was low, the confidence of his men in their officers was low, and he knew that any postponement of the attack would only further lower morale and confidence. Even though the force on the West Bank had not yet captured and turned the American guns, a critical part of the overall plan, he gave the order and the rocket went up to signal the beginning of the attack. At first the attack seemed to go well as the British pushed any advance American troops back to the line. As the early morning fog lifted and the Americans could see the great army marching towards them they broke out into cheers. Finally the orders went out to open fire and soon the whole field was a constant rolling thunder of cannon, musket and rifle fire. The British were mowed down by the hundreds. Entire files and sections of the advance fell to the ground. For brief periods a column would halt, only to reform and start forward again. Then the British troops refused to go any more. Pakenham was with the advance on the right, urging his men onward, when he was hit and mortally wounded. He was carried to the rear. Then Gibbs, second in command and leading the attack along the swamp, was killed. Leading the attack along the river, Keane was wounded as well. Just before his death Pakenham sent an order to Lambert to take command and bring up the reserves, but the messenger was killed and the order never delivered. The reserve only covered the retreat of the other two brigades.

After barely two hours the British guns were silent. The Americans ceased fire and as the fog and smoke cleared they peered out over a scene of death and suffering. They described the plantation fields of the Chalmet family as a "sea of red," covered with British red coats, in some places lying two and three men deep. American casualties for that morning were only thirteen; British casualties numbered over 2000.

By the next day, January 9, the British had called a truce and were gathering their wounded and burying their dead. They decided to withdraw from these lands below the city and reembark on their ships. It was a careful and discreet withdrawal that took nine days to complete. On January

⁵ These numbers are from Remini, pp. 130-31, and he does not cite his source. Other authors and other sources have given significantly different numbers for troops on both sides. If a living history interpreter chooses to quote other numbers, he or she should simply be prepared to cite his or her source(s).

⁶ Remini, p. 140.

18 the British slipped out of camp under cover of a thick fog, and on January 27 their fleet sailed away.

FURTHER READING

Following are some of the more popular books on the War of 1812 and the Battle of New Orleans that should be available in better libraries around the USA and Canada.

Coles, Harry L., *The War of 1812*. Chicago, 1965.

Hickey, Donald R., *War of 1812, A Forgotten Conflict*. Urbana, Illinois, 1989.

LaTour, Arsene Lacarriere, *Historical Memoir of the War in West Florida and Louisiana 1814-1815*. Gainesville, Florida, 1964 (originally published 1816).

Owsley, Frank Jr., *Struggle for the Gulf Borderlands, The Creek War and the Battle of New Orleans*. Gainesville, Florida, 1981.

Patterson, Benton Rain, *The Generals: Andrew Jackson, Sir Edward Pakenham, and the Road to the Battle of New Orleans*. New York, 2005.

Perkins, Bradford, editor, *The Causes of the War of 1812*. New York, 1962.

Pickles, Tim, *New Orleans 1815, Andrew Jackson Crushes the British*. Oxford, 1993.

Reilly, Robin, *The British at the Gates, The New Orleans Campaign in the War of 1812*. New York, 1974.

Remini, Robert V., *The Battle of New Orleans, Andrew Jackson and America's First Military Victory*. New York, 1999.

Do you intend to participate in the Friday School Day? YES / NO

Please describe the activities and demonstrations the school groups can expect to see in your camp area.

Do you intend to participate in the Friday evening Lantern Tour? YES / NO

Can any women members please act as guides or escorts during the lantern tour? YES / NO

Do any women members want to participate in the women's vignette during the lantern tour? YES / NO

Do you or any members want to schedule and present a short individual interpretive program or demonstration during the main event on Saturday? Please describe. (The park encourages those that play musical instruments or like to demonstrate any other period craft or skill, military or otherwise, to consider presenting a short program.)

Please return the completed application **by October 15, 2006.**

Mail it to: attn: 192nd Anniversary
 419 Decatur Street
 New Orleans, LA 70130

or fax it to: (504) 589-4155.

Please share this announcement packet and application with others who may be interested in participating. It is also available in PDF format on our website, www.nps.gov/jela/. We encourage and welcome any interested War of 1812-era units or individuals to apply, **but only those who receive confirmation from the park will be allowed to participate in the 192nd Anniversary Commemoration of the Battle of New Orleans.**

Questions? Contact Park Ranger Danny Forbis at (504) 589-2636 x 228 or danny_forbis@nps.gov